THE Reconstructionist

Vol. X. April 13, 1944 Nisan 20, 5704 No. 5

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CORRESPONDENCE

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the Reconstructionist

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THE
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Vol. X. April 13, 1944 Nisan 20, 5704 No. 5

EDITORIALS

THE PRICE OF FREEDOM— A PESAH MESSAGE

OUR observance of the Passover this year calls for more than the mere celebration of the freedom achieved in the events which the festival commemorates. We are today engaged in a mortal struggle against forces that would enslave us. We should seek in the Passover story truths that will help us to victory in that struggle. One of these truths is that liberty, when conceived merely negatively as freedom from restraint, is self-destructive. It leads to anarchy which, in turn, tends to the domination of the weaker by the stronger. It is thus self-frustrating and ends in slavery.

The Biblical story of the Exodus impresses this on us in many ways. The message of Moses to his people was not merely that God wanted them to be free, but that He wanted them to be free to serve Him. The challenge of God to Pharaoh is not just "Let My people go!" but "Let My people go that they may serve Me." The Rabbis interpreted the meaning of the story correctly when they declared that God's reason for redeeming Israel was that He wanted them to be His servants and "not the servants of servants." They were to be emancipated from bondage to a human tyrant in order that they might dedicate themselves to a life which accorded with divine law. They were to be free to create a society which, by its justice and humanity, would testify to the sovereignty of God.

Failure to regard liberation as the opportunity for a better life and not solely as an end in itself always endangers freedom by not making people willing to pay the price of freedom. That price usually involves not only privation but a temporary surrender of individual liberties in the interest of group survival. The story of Israel's journey from Egypt to the Promised Land is full of vivid illustrations of this truth. Among the hosts of Israel were many who lacked the vision to understand the sublime purpose of a Moses. For them liberation meant merely escape from the lash of the task-master. Consequently, no sooner were they confronted with the hardships of desert life than they were anxious to return to Egypt and its fleshpots, even though this meant submission to the lash. Again, the failure of many of the Israelites to grasp the ideal of freedom as Moses understood it led to disloyalty to his leadership. The very survival of the people depended on their delegation of authority to him as the one man among them with experience in the desert and its ways. There

was no danger of his abusing that authority, for he was the meekest of men, nevertheless his leadership aroused envy and hostility. A political opposition utilized libertarian slogans in a revolt against him and Aaron: "Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them!"

One would have to be blind not to see analogies between the experiences of our fathers in their exodus from Egypt and our own experiences in the present war of liberation. We are confronted with the same lack of appreciation of the ultimate goal of freedom, the same reluctance to sacrifice our fleshpots and even some of our cherished peace-time liberties. We chafe and fret, we grumble and complain, and some of us even rebel against and resist the restraints imposed by our government on our right to buy and sell whatever we want at whatever price we can get or pay. The people who patronize black markets in our day are clearly the spiritual descendants of those who in the wilderness hankered after the fleshpots of Egypt. If they have their way they will bring us back to worse than Egyptian bondage, to the slavery of fascism.

And can we not recognize the Korahs of our day in those who sling mud at the President and use libertarian slogans to advance selfish interests. "Freedom of enterprise," "states rights," "private initiative," "freedom to choose one's own job" —all these represent valid ideals. But every time we hear them used as slogans we must ask ourselves for what purpose and in what way they are to be applied. If their application will impede the victory of our nation and the nations allied with us in the war against fascism, they are being used not to effect but to destroy freedom. If their application, even though not hindering the war effort, will hinder the achievement of a just, secure and peaceful social order after the war, they are being used against and not for the purposes which freedom must serve.

What applies to the struggle for freedom on the part of all the United Nations certainly applies to the Jewish struggle for group survival and redemption which is a part of it. We Jews have also in our midst those who construe their freedom as freedom to enjoy the fleshpots and to worship the golden calf. For them the fight against anti-Semitism is not a fight for the right to be Jews, but merely a fight for the right to escape from Jewish loyalties and responsibilities, and to further their personal careers. In the determination of Jewish policy also, libertarian slogans are used to defeat liberty. "Freedom of conscience," "No divided loyalties," "Faith in democracy," are all valid slogans if rightly applied. But they are being applied today in ways that are destructive of Jewish life and hence of Jewish liberty. "Freedom of conscience" has been used to justify the refusal to abide by a majority decision of a democratically elected representation of American Jewry, the American Jewish Conference. "No divided loyalties" has been used as if Americanism were a totalitarian concept irreconcilable with any other group loyalties, and specifically with the loyalty of Jews to Palestine, world Jewry and Hebrew culture. "Faith in democracy" has been used to challenge the right of Jews to choose whether they want to live in the Diaspora or in a democratic Jewish Commonwealth, the national home of the Jewish people.

But if we understand the message of Pesah as implied in the whole story of the Exodus we will not make such mistakes either in our Judaism or our Americanism. We will not then begrudge the price exacted for the achievement of true freedom. Nor will we confuse the assertion of arbitrary individualistic rights with true liberalism. We will accept privation, and realize that only through dis-

ciplined loyalty can genuine freedom be achieved. In the words of the Rabbis, "Only he is truly free, who practices the law of God." That is another way of saying that genuine freedom can be achieved only through voluntary submission to regulations that are for the public good.

TERRORISM IN PALESTINE

THE reports of the terrorist activities of the *Irgun Tzevai,* (Military Organization) in Palestine are ugly news. The *havlagah* (self-restraint) exercised by the Yishuv under the most trying circumstances in the past has been a great source of pride to all Jewry. In the face of riot and massacre, Palestine Jewry, although displaying the utmost energy and daring in self-defense, scrupulously refrained from reprisals on innocent parties and from acts of terrorist aggression. Now that good record has been spoiled by the outbreaks of irresponsible fanatics.

Those outbreaks, to be sure, have been repudiated by all the official spokesmen of organized Palestinian Jewry and by the entire Jewish press of the country. But the sensational crimes of the terrorists will make more of an impression, precisely because they are shocking, than the denunciation of them by those who speak with the authentic voice of the Jewish population as a whole. Such acts as the assassination of policemen in cold blood not only are ethically indefensible, as is murder generally, but in the present situation they are tantamount to treason to the Jewish cause. They provide our enemies with a weapon against us at a time when the whole situation of Jewry is most precarious, when it is of the utmost importance for us to win the goodwill of decent people everywhere.

But, with all our condemnation of the acts of the terrorists, we cannot feel that the blame for what has happened rests on them alone. They are themselves victims of a terror far more extensive and far more destructive than any they have been guilty of, the terror of Nazism. The most tragic aspect of the Nazi madness is that it maddens its victims, that it infects them with its own venom. The exercise of calculated cruelty and brutality makes men lose faith in moral values. Seeing how little justice and decency have availed to check the atrocities of brutal tyrants, those against whom such atrocious acts are committed or attempted are likely to discard moral restraints and to imitate their oppressors. That some Jews, coming for the most part from the hell of Axis-dominated Poland, should have been driven mad by their experiences and gone berserk is horrifying but comprehensible. It is all the more comprehensible in the light of how the Jewish people has been treated by those in authority in Palestine.

What has the government of Palestine done to restore the faith of Hitler's victims in the cause of justice and honor? Have not the public acts of its officials served notice again and again that they have more respect for force and violence than for justice and right? Is not the whole White Paper policy a truckling to murderous aggression? How can the rulers of Palestine command respect for law and order, when their policy is dictated from first to last by a lawless repudiation of an international covenant? The acts of the Jewish terrorists are criminal, but they at least have the excuse, "*En adam nitpas al tzaaro*" ("One is not held responsible for what he does when in pain"). Their crimes are irresponsible acts of irresponsible people. Can one say as much for the misdeeds of the Palestine administration that has condemned to death at the hands of the Nazis great numbers of Jews who might have escaped to their national home? Remember the *Struma.* Were not those who died, when the *Struma* went down, victims of a cruel-

ty that is the more reprehensible because practiced by men in authority, men charged with responsibility for facilitating the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine? And now, no doubt, these same hardened cynics, after having played, in effect if not in intent, the role of *agents provocateurs,* will use the incidents which their own callousness to human rights and human suffering has provoked as an argument for continuing to oppose Jewish rights with respect to Palestine.

Nor can the responsibility for creating the moral atmosphere which breeds violence be placed entirely at the doors of the Nazis and the British administration of Palestine. We in America must share the blame. President Roosevelt has assured Zionist leaders that the United States never approved of the White Paper and that, in the final settlement, the claims of the Jewish national home would receive due recognition. We have no doubt whatever that the President means what he says and, when the time comes, will fulfil his promise if it lies within his power to do so. But, in the meantime the effect of pursuing a military and a civil policy which are at cross purposes is inevitably moral equivocation. We leave the Arabs under the impression that the Jews will never be permitted to become a majority in Palestine. We leave the Jews with the opposite impression. Again Palestine is being made the "too much promised" land, promised to the Jews by the Balfour Declaration and the President's statement, promised to the Arabs by the White Paper and by the apparent acquiescence in it of our government in permitting it to go into effect without protest.

We realize the difficulties in which our government finds itself. The President was doubtless confronted by a moral dilemma not susceptible of immediate resolution. But that dilemma would never have arisen if, at the time when the White Paper was issued, we had immediately reacted to its injustice and voiced an emphatic protest. The country, however, was then in an isolationist mood, and the crime against our people was not resented or resisted.

But, though the sins committed against our people help to explain the actions of the terrorists, they do not justify them. Whenever the forces of violence and brutality find vent in war, there are men who call for a moratorium on morality. For all participation in war involves moral compromise. But it need not involve moral defeatism. No matter how many lives are daily taken on the battlefield, the unnecessary killing of a single human being in cold blood is still murder.

Let the Yishuv, therefore, persevere in the course of *havlagah.* If the Jewish people is true to itself and resists the infection of fascist violence it will call forth from the rest of mankind resources of good will and cooperation by which our dreams of a Jewish Commonwealth in Palestine will yet be realized.

A FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEM IN JEWISH EDUCATION

ABOUT forty rabbis gathered at the Jewish Theological Seminary on March 28 last, to consider one of the most important problems on the American Jewish scene. The call was issued by Professor Kaplan to graduates of the Seminary living in and near New York. The purpose was to study the problem of Jewish teaching personnel.

Due to a combination of circumstances, the Jewish teaching profession has not been attracting the men and women of the highest intellectual calibre. As a result of that fact, the quality of the teaching has not been as good as it might have been. This, in turn, has resulted in the

failure of such teaching to inspire young people to devote themselves professionally to the cause of Jewish education.

This is particularly true of the non-Orthodox group. In Orthodox circles, there appears to be quite a good deal of activity. New schools are opening, and adequate personnel seems to be available. The non-Orthodox groups, however, seem unable to reproduce their kind. They must continually draw from the vast reservoir of Orthodoxy for their teaching personnel as well as for their candidates for the rabbinate.

The vicious circle of progressive deterioration has not been broken. Hence, the urgent need to discuss this question. At the conference, several papers were read; and the tentative conclusions which were reached may be summarized as follows:

a) One of the most serious defects of the non-Orthodox education is the inadequate amount of time allotted to it. The unwillingness of parents to allocate more time for Jewish studies is responsible not only for the insufficient training of the child but also for the deplorable condition of the Jewish teaching profession. Although teachers are often paid adequately per hour, they are not offered a sufficient number of hours of work. Therefore they cannot earn enough to make the profession attractive to men and women who are accustomed to a fairly decent standard of living. More time must be given to the students and to the teachers.

b) The rabbis are often at fault for not devoting a greater proportion of *their* time to the schools of their congregations, and to the problem of Jewish education on the communal scale. While it is true that many demands are made on the time and energy of the rabbi, he should regard education, elementary and adult, as his prime function.

c) Teachers training schools should be urged to expand their curricula to include training for group work and for adult education. If the religious school teacher could supplement his work with additional educational tasks, he would not only be enabled to earn a living wage, but he would also become more intimately associated with the men and women of the congregations and serve as a more vital influence in the community.

d) Wherever possible, attempts should be made to merge the schools of two or more congregations so that a greater effiency can be achieved. Certainly there should be more coordination of program and curriculum, and frequent periodic conferences of the rabbis and teachers of every community.

e) If Jewish life is ever to produce a small but powerful minority from whom leaders, rabbis and teachers may be drawn, a minimal number of all-day schools ("parochial") will have to be established. Only through the integration of the Jewish and general curricula can children be given a thorough, and at the same time an unirksome, Jewish education.

We are gratified that a first step has been taken to grapple with this problem. In the light of it, all other internal questions are remote and theoretical. With an informed laity, with an inspired professional leadership, all Jewish enterprises can be transformed from half-hearted and directionless activities to enthusiastic and meaningful Jewish living.

REALITIES AND VALUES

THE GLOOM CREATED BY THE news of the German occupation of Hungary with its 900,000 Jewish population was somewhat mitigated by the prompt action of President Roosevelt in warning the Hungarian population against cooperating with the Nazis in the persecution of Jews or others who oppose Nazism. His message announced that the United

States would do everything in its power to help Jews and others hunted by the Nazis to escape. It asked the native population to help refugees across the border and to keep a record of all who engaged in persecution of Jews and other anti-Nazis, so that the perpetrators of atrocities may at some future time be tried for their crimes. It promised to reward those who helped refugees to escape. It urged neutral countries to grant them asylum and promised to provide for their maintenance and support. That this message was not intended only "for home consumption" is evident from a report that a secret "Kossuth" radio, already in operation in Hungary, included in its broadcast the full text of President Roosevelt's message. In view of the rapid progress of the Russian armies, it may be hoped that the prompt action of the President will be effective in saving at least a considerable proportion of the Jewish population of Hungary.

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RIGID TRADITIONALISTS FREQUENTLY charge all who break away in one respect or another from Orthodox standards with disrupting the unity of Israel. Only an unqualified acceptance of the authority of tradition, they contend, can provide the basis for unity in Jewish life. In view of that contention, we were interested in some comments on the recent Orthodox Conference for Palestine and Rescue. They appear in an editorial in an Orthodox periodical, *Jewish Horizon,* the organ of Hapoel Hamizrachi, and read as follows: "The exaggerated and lamentable individualism of persons and groups in Orthodoxy, a concomitant of our *galut* life, is responsible for the phenomenon that every group, no matter how small, pretends to be no less than the only representative of true Judaism and ignores every other group outside its narrow circle." But is the tendency "to ignore every other group outside its narrow circle" merely a "concomitant of the *galut?*" Is it not rather a concomitant, or to be more exact an inherent characteristic, of dogmatic traditionalism? Those who take their stand on an authoritarian tradition rather than on reason can brook no compromise. They must maintain the absolute correctness of their stand and regard all alternatives as inadmissable. All of which goes to prove that, in a voluntarist community, real unity can only be achieved if we accept the Reconstructionist thesis that Jewish unity must allow for diversity.

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WE HAVE JUST RECEIVED A copy of the minutes of the quarterly meeting of the Jewish Community Council of Detroit. We like the way that organization goes about many of its tasks. The fact that it gives such publicity to its minutes instead of merely circulating them among its members is one of the things we like. If we want democracy in Jewish community life, the public must be kept constantly informed of what its representatives do in its behalf and in its name. Not only has the Community Council of Detroit given widespread publicity to the minutes of its meeting but it has set aside the month of April as Jewish Community Council month during which speakers will visit the constituent organizations to acquaint them with the work and plans of the Council. This is a welcome change from the method of conducting Jewish affairs by small self-constituted boards or committees which meet like the directors of a corporation and dispose of public matters without ever consulting the public. Perhaps one reason why this particular Council is so ready to inform the public of what it is doing is because it has really been doing something worthwhile. Our readers will recall articles published in our paper on the Council's treatment of such problems as Negro-Jewish relations, the establish-

ment of standards of ethical practice in Jewish industries and trades, and of other issues.

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EDITORIALS IN A RELIGIOUS periodical usually tell the reader how things ought to be, rather than how they are. At least, this is what editorials in the Christian Century usually do—except in one important instance. When it comes to Zionism and Palestine, the hard realities loom larger than they *ought*. Reporting on the impressive and widely publicized dinner of the Christian leaders in Washington recently, the *Christian Cetury* remarks that, while those who attended the dinner seem to be convinced of Zionism, it is hardly a fact that Christian sentiment in the United States favors it; and besides, if anyone thinks the Arabs are going to stand for a Jewish majority he is mistaken. We are as aware of the difficulties as the *Christian Century* is. What we should like to know from its editor is whether he believes Zionism *ought* to succeed. If so, then all Christians should back it. If not, let him tell us why not, and then let a man like Reinhold Niebuhr answer at length in the columns of the *Century*.

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THE HEBREW TEACHERS COLlege of Boston has just been made a gift of a site in New Hampshire for the purpose of establishing a summer school and camp. The school and camp will be on the level of secondary and advanced education. This is the first experiment of its kind; altthough in recent years the tendency has grown to emphasize the educational opportunities of the summer-time to a greater and greater extent. The fee for the season will not be very low, and it remains to be seen whether parents are going to be willing to spend over $200 a summer for this type of camp-school. We wish the experiment every success, for we too are convinced that the summer, out of doors and away from home, can work miracles in the cultivation of habits and the acquisition of knowledge.

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THE *Chicago Jewish Chronicle* runs a column called "Jottings"; and the editor of the column ran a letter which he had recently received from a very worried gentleman who asked for answers to a series of questions. His questions are so much to the point that he should be congratulated—even the editor of Jottings deserves credit for listing them. The questioner wants to know, for example, why there is so much objection to assimilation. What shall unite Jews (everyone shouts "unity")? Of what shall we be proud? What *kind* of Jewish life should we lead? How can Palestine help us Americans? What makes our culture "glorious"? And so on. By the way, he despairs of ever getting an answer from the rabbis. They are too busy, he says. Well, Mr. Questioner, we've been doing a lot of thinking along these lines. We too feel that people generally have been too busy and have neglected these questions. We too believe that unless we work out a philosophy, even our routine activities will soon begin to dwindle. Can we interest you in the Reconstructionist movement?

Jesus, Paul and Sholem Asch

By ROBERT GORDIS

LIVING in a day of physical disaster and moral disintegration akin to our own, the prophet Jeremiah passed devastating judgment on human nature: "Man's heart is full of deceit and very weak; who can know it?" Of all the forms of deceit, self-deception is the worst.

This melancholy reflection is induced by the remarkable spiritual development undergone by the well-known Yiddish writer, Sholem Asch.

Except for his latest phase, his career has followed the well-known pattern of most modern Jewish writers. Born in Poland in 1880, he received a traditional Hebrew education, and later came under the influence of modern ideas. Asch began to write in Hebrew but soon turned exclusively to Yiddish. His high literary gifts quickly won for him a place of distinction in modern Yiddish letters. His short stories, novels and dramas, dealing with Jewish life both in Europe and America, won wide acclaim. Some of his earlier works, like "God of Vengeance," appeared in English years ago and much of his output was translated into Hebrew. But Asch remained a Yiddish writer, paying the "penalty" of writing for his own people, and being admired and known by them alone.

Asch's Literary Career

Ironically enough, the year that saw Hitler's advent to power, 1933, saw the beginnings of Asch's wider reputation. In that year "Three Cities" appeared, a novel dealing with the impact of the First World War and its aftermath on modern Jews in eastern Europe. The work found a considerable public among a new group of readers, American English-speaking Jews. Its success led to the translation of others of Asch's works into English, some older, others more recent, like "Salvation," a fictionized treatment of the life of a Hasidic rabbi.

The latest stage in Sholem Asch's expanding literary reputation came with the appearance of the English translation of his novel, "The Nazarene," which created a sensation throughout the country. With deep sympathy for his subject and genuine literary skill, Asch utilized a broad knowledge of the historical background of the period to tell the story of Jesus of Nazareth, treating him like a Hasidic rabbi, and actually transferring some of the traditional stories of the Baal Shem Tov to the milieu of First Century Palestine.

"The Nazarene" is by no means the only treatment of Jesus in modern Jewish literature. The Palestinian novelist, A. A. Kabak, has used the same theme in his novel, *"Bamisheol Hatzar,"* ("The Narrow Path"), and Professor Joseph Klausner of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem has issued scholarly and sympathetic studies of Jesus and Paul.

Nonetheless, Asch's novel aroused considerable antagonism in widely differing camps. He naturally did not go far enough for orthodox Christian believers who regard Jesus as a person in the Godhead. The book was accordingly placed on the Catholic Index of forbidden books. In Jewish circles, the book was opposed even by elements far removed from devotion to Jewish religious values, like the labor newspaper, the "Jewish Daily Forward," for which the novel had originally been written. Among traditionally-minded Jews, there were many who looked askance at the highly sympathetic treatment of a figure, who, whatever his original relation to Judaism, is

now separated from Israel by two thousand years of persecution and by rivers of blood, which, in Zangwill's striking phrase, have made the people of Christ, the Christ of peoples.

The Treatment of Jesus in "The Nazarene"

To make my own standpoint clear, it may be added that I liked "The Nazarene" and said so in an extensive discussion of the book. At the time of its appearance, I made one fundamental criticism, which has since gained added significance. While the book contains many striking characters, vividly and clearly delineated, the one figure which is cloudy and blurred is that of Jesus himself.

The author was, therefore, in a sense, begging the crucial question: What was Jesus? For, as the vast scholarly literature attests, there is scarcely one feature of his life and work that is clear. In the pages of the New Testament, texts are available that contradict each other directly on such questions as Jesus' birth, the content of his message, his teaching on social ethics, his attitude toward the Gentiles, the observance of the Torah, and the survival of Israel. Most important of all, it is impossible to discover a consistent view of Jesus' claim as to his own role, whether he regarded himself as a rabbi, a prophet, the Messiah or, as seems impossible for a Jew, as the Son of God.

The reason for the contradictory picture that emerges from the New Testament is that the three Synoptic Gospels and John recount Jesus' life and sayings from the opposing standpoints of the various groups that were struggling for supremacy in the early Christian Church. There were the Judaeo-Christians, who were rigidly observing Jews, differing from other Pharisaic Jews only by their faith that Jesus was the Messiah and had already appeared. At the other extreme, were the Gentile Christians, who came from paganism into the new faith and lacked appreciation of the Jewish background of their religion. Finally, there were the moderates, who attempted to harmonize the two wings of early Christianity, by making the specific Jewish elements, like the rite of circumcision, optional in the new religion, so that Jewish Christians might retain them and Gentile Christians would not be bound by them. Each of these schools naturally sought to buttress its position by attributing sayings to Jesus in harmony with its standpoint.

Because of these contradictions in the sources, every reader and scholar has been compelled to select those features in the Gospel story that seem to him attractive or historically sound and to reject the others. In order to fashion a credible figure, each writer has created Jesus in his own image.

That is the central problem, and Asch by-passed it in "The Nazarene." He did so by imitating the procedure adopted in the New Testament. He has the story of Jesus told by different characters, Jewish and Gentile, each from his own level of comprehension. As a result, Asch's own conception of Jesus emerges nowhere, and the hero of the book is the most nebulous figure in it. While some readers found this to be a purely esthetic defect, others felt that the device was not accidental, but had been consciously chosen, because it agreed so well with the traditional Christian attitude on Jesus which naturally tried to "harmonize" the Gospel accounts. Moreover, in "The Nazarene," Jesus' father, Joseph, plays no part, even though it is inconceivable that in a traditional Jewish home in first century Palestine, a father should be of no consequence and the mother alone the central figure. Some readers declared that Asch was "playing to the galleries" of his new-

found readers, many of whom where accustomed to the idea that Jesus had no human father.

Paul, the Hero of "The Apostle"

The next stage in Sholem Asch's development came with the publication of his latest novel, "The Apostle," dealing with the life of Paul. For this novel, critical acclaim, even in the general press, was much more restrained. It was regarded as lacking in vitality and interest and as overburdened with theological discussions. Its literary virtues and defects are not our concern, nor are we disposed to deny Asch the right to his own interpretation of Paul. There is no subject in heaven or earth that may be legitimately excluded from the purview of the scholar or the artist.

What is interesting and, in view of Sholem Asch's position in Jewish literature, significant, is the trend of his thinking that led him to select Paul as the hero of a massive 800-page novel. For while Christians and Jews will naturally differ in their interpretation of Jesus and Paul, it is undeniable that Jesus has been revered and loved by millions. Paul, on the other hand, has rarely been regarded as a sympathetic character even by his admirers, who recognize his great achievement in founding the Christian Church. The reason lies in Paul's personality and world-view, both of which cannot be understood except in terms of his background.

When Jesus was crucified by the Roman procurator as a Jewish Messiah, and therefore a possible disturber of the status quo, only a small sect remained behind who continued to believe in him as the Anointed. These Jews were otherwise indistinguishable from their fellow-Jews, with whom they shared the Pharisaic interpretation of the Bible and the traditional Jewish way of life. That this petty sect could have long survived in Judaism after the death of its Saviour is highly doubtful. It was Paul's historic function to transform this tiny group, doomed to extinction, into a mighty faith destined to conquer the western world.

Paul was not a Palestinian Jew, but a native of Tarsus in Asia Minor, a Hellenistic Jew raised in an alien environment. He received a Jewish education, the extent of which is in doubt. While he claimed to have been a pupil of Rabbi Gamaliel, Paul cites the Bible exclusively in the text of the Septuagint, the Greek translation, rather than in the Hebrew original. At all events, Paul's outlook on life was profoundly influenced, if not dominated, by the Greek world in which he lived.

Paul confesses that originally he was a fanatical enemy of the Judaeo-Christian sect, in which respect he differed radically from the recognized Jewish leaders, who never molested it. Then one day on the road to Damascus, Paul saw a vision of Jesus and underwent a conversion. He became a fervent disciple of the new sect, putting his incomparable energies and considerable gifts at the service of the new cause.

As always happens with great popular leaders, Paul's convictions coincided with the felt needs of his era. It was not that he trimmed his ideas to suit men's views. It was rather, to speak in Carlyle's terms, that he was the Hero who expressed the spirit of his age. Paul lived at a time when the old pagan religions underlying the glory of Greece and the grandeur of Rome were dying. Throughout the ancient world, men were searching for a new faith and many creeds were flooding the Greco-Roman world from the East. Particularly popular were mystery religions of all types. These cults promised salvation to the individual at a time when the collective aspect of society was disintegrating and men no longer felt any

profound loyalty to the group, whether people, state or Empire.

During this period, Judaism was winning converts by the tens and hundreds of thousands. From every stratum of society, from the slaves in the market places to the very palace of the Emperor, men and women were being won to Judaism by its exalted conception of God, its noble morality, the grandeur of its scriptures and the beauty of the Jewish way of life. The great Christian historian, Adolf Harnack, estimates that in the first century approximately ten percent of the population of the then civilized world professed Judaism, some four out of forty million.

These proselytes did not find the road to Judaism easy. Acceptance of the Jewish religion required adherence to the Jewish people and the observance of an elaborate ritual code that entered into every aspect of life. For males, conversion to Judaism was further complicated by the requirement of circumcision. Yet the tide of conversion continued unabated.

Paul and the Origin of Christianity

At this juncture of human history, Paul recognized an extraordinary opportunity for a new religion that would be based both upon Judaism and the personality of Jesus, but transformed so as to conform more closely to the background and outlook of would-be converts. To these changes Paul was predisposed by his own upbringing and education in a Greek pagan environment.

Paul accordingly eliminated from his new religion its organic relation with the Jewish people, such elements as the Hebrew language, Jewish national hopes and the ceremonies of Judaism. Those elements that were retained were given completely new meanings. Passover, the commemoration of exodus from Egyptian bondage, became Easter, the celebration of the Resurrection. Shavuot, the traditional anniversary of the giving of the Torah on Mt. Sinai, became Pentecost, the Festival of the Outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Paul had never known Jesus in the flesh. It was thus all the easier for him to transform the carpenter of Nazareth into a supramundane figure, a supernatural Christ coming to redeem all who believed in him from the taint of sin. Thus Jesus became for Paul literally a Son of God, who was later to become one of the three Persons of the Trinity.

From his Greek background, Paul had absorbed the idea of dualism, according to which body and soul were not only distinct but diametrically opposed elements in man. The body was the seat of sin and evil, the soul alone being pure and incorruptible. Paul had a deep aversion to physical relations and he extolled celibacy as the highest good. Marriage he regarded as a necessary concession to human weakness, for "it is better to marry than to burn."

As the basic tenets of the new faith became clear to Paul, he set about winning recruits to the cause. With abounding energy he traveled up and down the Mediterranean littoral, agitating for the new religion, fighting enemies within and without the Church, and ultimately achieving victory. With justice, Paul is regarded as one of the most important figures of history, the true founder of the Christian Church.

In spite of this great historic achievement, Paul is not generally regarded as an engaging personality. Many modern Christians who are disposed to subject the content of their faith to the test of reason are led to abandon some of the basic ideas of Paul's outlook, such as his conception of Jesus as a supernatural being, his negative attitude towards family relations and his general unconcern with social issues. This is true of many Chris-

tians though they do not all go as far as Pearl Buck, the daughter of missionaries, who declared that she hated Paul for the effect of his teachings on the life of her parents.

No matter how Christians may evaluate Paul's role in history, it is clear that aside from several beautiful passages in his Epistles, Paul has little to teach the Jew. Even of Jesus it remains true that his greatest teachings are formulations, in matchless form to be sure, of the teachings of Biblical and Rabbinic Judaism. As the German scholar, Wellhausen, admits, Jesus was a Jew, not a Christian. When Christians fail to recognize the Jewish origin and character of the best of Jesus' teachings, they commit a great historic injustice. When Jews ignore these facts, they pay a heavy penalty, in the form of self-hate and undeserved contempt for their own tradition.

The Messiah Complex of Sholem Asch

In this day of world conflict and indescribable agony for Israel, as it struggles for self-preservation, what led Sholem Asch to make Paul the hero of a massive novel? Most remarkable of all was Asch's prayer of thanksgiving to God on the closing page of the book, "that Thou hast given me the strength to withstand all temptations and overcome all obstacles, those of my own making and those made by others, and to complete the two works, 'the Nazarene' and 'the Apostle,' which are one work, so that I might set forth in them the merit of Israel, whom Thou hast elected to bring the light and the faith to the races of the world." What was Mr. Asch implying by "obstacles made by others?" Whence this consciousness of his election by God with its unmistakable assumption of sanctity? What untrodden paths was Sholem Asch treading?

The answer came in an interview which he granted Mr. Frank J. Mead, the editor of the "Christian Herald." Its sensational character is clear from these excerpts:

"I couldn't help writing on Jesus. Since I first met Him, He has held my mind and heart. I grew up, you know, on the border of Poland and Russia, which wasn't exactly the finest place for a Jew to sit down and write a life of Jesus Christ. Yet even through those years, the hope of doing just that fascinated me. I floundered a bit, at first; I was seeking that something for which so many of us search—that surety, that faith, that spiritual content in my living which would bring me peace and through which I might help bring some peace to others. I found it in the Nazarene. . . .

"For Jesus Christ, to me, is the outstanding personality of all time, all history, both as Son of God and Son of Man. Everything He ever said or did has value for us today, and that is something you can say of no other man, alive or dead. No other teacher—Jewish Christian, Buddhist, Mohammedan—is still a teacher whose teaching is such a guidepost for the world we live in. . . .

"No other religious leader, either, has ever become so personal a part of people as the Nazarene. When you understand Jesus, you understand that he came to save you, to come into your personality. It isn't just a case of misty, uncertain relationship between a worshiper and an unseen God, that is abstract; Jesus is personal."

Particularly interesting was his statement:

"I suppose the final inspiration to write, the insistence that I write, came to me in Palestine. I saw that I could never write about Jesus until I went to his homeland. So I went, in 1907. Then the story really came alive. The whole landscape of the Holy Land held His footprints; every bush and tree and stone

was afire with Christ. I made more pilgrimages to Palestine, later, but if you want a date, it was in 1908 that the real writing began."

Finally, Asch expressed the hope:

"Who knows—maybe, some day, we shall be worshiping under one roof."

One hardly believes that even Mr. Asch expects the Catholic Church to adopt Judaism in the near future.

His statement about his visit in Palestine is especially noteworthy. If true, it means that for thirty-seven years he kept his soul-stirring experience so completely a secret that no one suspected it. If not, the statement can only be described as a type of self-hypnosis, which may be the key to his present state of mind. One cannot tell whether it was caused by the long years of economic insecurity and comparative obscurity as a Jewish writer among Jews, followed by the blaze of world-wide fame and success. Or perhaps it was induced by the depth of Jewish tragedy in the world today, which led him to imagine that some kind of acceptance of the dominant religion would bring safety to the Jew—a solution advanced a thousand times before and a thousand times rejected, not only because it is unworkable, but because it is unworthy of the dignity of the free human spirit.

The publication of the interview naturally created a storm in Jewish circles. After several inquiries and evasive replies, Mr. Asch made public the text of a statement which he telegraphed to the editor of the "Christian Herald." It reads:

"I would no more think of leaving the faith of my ancestors than I would of betraying my country. Jesus, to my mind, is not rupture with Judaism, but rather a continuation of the high ideals of Judaism. . . . While the interview as published is correct in spirit, it was on some vital points, if not directly misquoted, badly misunderstood. Although I expressed my appreciation to Mr. Mead in writing and still do so now, I must insist on the following corrections: . . . I never mention the words 'the Son of God!' The expression 'the Son of God' on Jesus is not in accordance with my conception of Jesus. My conception is still Sh'ma-Yisroel. Every other of my expressions in the interview on the role of Jesus and his importance still stands."

Even with these modifications, it is obvious that Mr. Asch has traveled a long road. Whatever the cause, he seems to have developed a Messianic complex, a feeling that he can disregard two thousand years of recorded history and deeply rooted forces, powerfully alive today. It seems to be his impression that, through his books, he can create a new type, the "Gentile-Jew" or the "Jew-Gentile," as he calls it in "The Apostle." We are not disposed to argue the idea. Christians as well as Jews will reject the new hybrid as the unreal creation of a febrile imagination. At most, Asch can only succeed in creating a few more Christians from ignorant and indifferent Jews—all for the love of Israel. In the "Ballad of Reading Gaol," Oscar Wilde sardonically says,

"For each man kills the thing he loves,
The brave man does it with a sword,
The coward with a kiss."

Perhaps, after all, it is not strange that in this day of spiritual chaos a Jewish writer of distinction should contribute so markedly to the weakening of Jewish solidarity and the distortion of Jewish values,—all for the love of Israel.

The Jewish people, described long ago as "a man of sorrow, acquainted with grief," may perchance brush away a tear at the thought of another gifted son who has fallen victim to the homelessness of the Jewish body and spirit in the world

today. For solace, the modern Jew may well take up the prayer book of the ages and find wisdom as well as courage in the ancient affirmation: "I trust not in mortal man, nor in any being to whom divine attributes are ascribed, but in the God of Heaven, who is the God of Truth, whose Torah is true, whose Prophets are true, and who is mighty in performing goodness and truth."

Seder in New Guinea

By LEONARD S. KRAUSE

IN the picturesque cocoanut groves of New Guinea on the night of the 19th of April, 1943, corresponding in the Jewish calendar to the 15th day of Nisan in the year 5703, there gathered together from different encampments a group of about fifty freedom-loving Jewish men who, in the midst of their struggle against tyranny and subjugation, tarried long enough to celebrate the first recorded deliverance from tyrants and slavery in the history of the world. On this site, disease-ridden, swamp-scourged and battle-scarred men and boys had made their sacrifices, many of them the supreme sacrifice, in order to preserve the values associated with the events which the Passover Seder commemorates. Here freedom's anniversary was peacefully, beautifully and religiously celebrated under the shadows of magnificently tall palm trees which achieved their own immortality by withstanding the deadly onslaughts of enemy weapons of destruction. How wonderfully appropriate this celebration! How symbolic of Judaism's destiny and freedom's indestructability!

The Setting

A tropical full moon shone with a brilliancy and clearness of outline that made one gasp with awe-stricken admiration and recall the words of the Psalmist, "How manifold are Thy works, O Lord; in wisdom Thou hast made them all; the earth is full of Thy possessions." In the moonlight were gathered together the Jewish soldiers from their numerous camps. Some had trudged several miles over hastily established jungle roads; others more fortunate had been brought by army jeep to the scene of Seder activities. Arriving singly and in groups the soldiers assembled around a large banquet table significantly shaped like a broad-based "V." In the center of this broad base sat the conductor of the Seder flanked by officers of the infantry and medical corps. The table, made of the bark of native eucalyptus trees and the seats of felled cocoanut trees, were the jungle's physical contribution to the paraphernalia of the Seder. The medical department had generously contributed bed sheets which served as table cloths. Several of the soldiers, in accordance with prescribed military regulations, had brought their weapons and laid them at their feet, a grim reminder of the mundane realities that formed the background of this solemnly spiritual ritual.

On the table in front of the leader of the service were placed three candles arranged in a triangle. The candles were imbedded in a modified tin flower pot decorated with silver tinsel and containing jungle earth. Flanking the outermost candles of the triangle were vases of earthenware painted a yellowish orange with a "star of David" design on them, which held native ferns and flowers, considerately offered for use by the Mormon chaplain. Overhead, two gasoline lan-

terns suspended from a rope furnished, together with the candles and moonlight, the illumination for this dramatic spectacle. One-ounce medicine glasses, borrowed for the occasion from medical supply, served as individual containers for the wine. A goblet of silver was furnished by the Jewish Welfare Board for use by the conductor. A flashlight and open box were the provisions made for continuance of the service in the event of an air raid alarm. Situated just to the right of the candles were layer on layer of matzos, the unleavened bread of Israel's affliction. Forming a sentinel-like guard over all these decorations was a line of half a dozen or so bottles of *Kosher le-Pesach* wine. In front of the conductor, who himself was clothed with an impressive new *tallit,* lay the three matzos, separated from each other by the interposed portions of a sterile medical department hand towel. On top of the matzos were placed in traditional arrangement a potato, salt water, and native bitter herbs plucked from shrubs in the grove area. Circumstantial obstacles nullified efforts to get the shankbone, horseradish and egg. They were nowhere to be had.

The Seder

After the regular Passover evening service, the Seder commenced. The Kiddush was solemnly recited with the traditional festival intonations. How realistically pertinent and circumstantially appropriate was the "*Shehehiyanu*" blessing.—"Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who hast preserved us alive, sustained us, and brought us to enjoy this season." Two of the youngest soldiers in the gathering asked the "*Fir Kashes*" (four questions). One explained that he had always asked the questions in years past and would for sentimental reasons like to do so again. His request was willingly granted. After the simultaneous asking of the questions by the two men a third asked the same questions in English. The answer '*avadim hayinu*"—"We were Pharoah's bondmen" opened the recital of the historical events which the Seder ritual commemorates. The entire Seder was conducted in Hebrew with certain parts also explained in English and, for those who did not read Hebrew, the corresponding pages in English were indicated. At the mention of each of the ten plagues inflicted on the Egyptians a drop of wine was spilled from the cup. The Rabbinical interpretation of this maneuver—"Israel's cup of joy cannot be full when the occasion of rejoicing involves suffering for others, even for its enemies" — helped renew in the congregants the humane sentiments which would facilitate the transition from the hostility of war to the realization of human brotherhood after our victory.

In close conformity to traditional observance, the potatoes in salt water and the bitter herbs were eaten and two glasses of wine were drunk before we tackled our main course, which consisted of matzos and fresh apples. Our plans for bananas were frustrated by the presence of the Japs in this area some months before. A sermon was offered during the main course (a very propitious time to sermonize to a group of soldiers—a few words of rabbinical wisdom might inadvertently be gobbled up). It expounded Leviticus XXII, verses 32 and 33—"And ye shall not profane My Holy Name; but I will be hallowed among the children of Israel: I am the Lord who hallow you, who brought you out of the Land of Egypt to be your God: I am the Lord." This passage has been termed by some authorities as Israel's Bible-in-little. Briefly the preacher attempted to point out the responsibility that each Jew as an individual has for maintaining the honor and good name of the Jewish people. God's name can best be hallowed when

the Jew assumes the Divine attributes of lovingkindness, justice, mercy and altruism. The individual Jew must be made aware of the fact that for every misdeed of his own the whole house of Israel stands convicted. A story to illustrate this point relates that a number of men set out to sea in a small boat. One of the group started to bore a hole under his seat. When the other passengers remonstrated with him he defended himself by proclaiming that he was only boring a hole under *his* seat. "It is true," they said, "that you are boring a hole under your own seat only, but, when the sea rushes in we shall all be drowned with you." On the positive side Israel is to hallow God's name by conduct which would impress others with the moral sturdiness and lofty ideals of Israel's codes of behavior. Finally, important as it is to make non-Jews respect Judaism, it is even more important to create respect for Judaism "among the children of Israel." The sermon completed, the matzos and apples duly consumed, Grace was said, a third glass of wine poured and consumed and an extra glass filled for Elijah the Prophet. The Seder continued on until the fourth glass of wine was drained and —as invariably happens at the Seder— someone accidentally spilled a glass of wine on the medical department's bed sheet table-cloth. The Seder closed officially with the prayer for the Divine Acceptance of the service and the hopeful chanting of *Leshanah Habaah b'Yerushalayim.* Some nostalgic realists substituted *"Be'America" for the b'Yerushalayim.*

Traditional Passover songs were sung while preparations for the homeward journey were made. An organ and organist, considerately loaned to us by the Mormon chaplain, played the accompaniment for an original Pesah song which made its debut on this occasion. It was led by the conductor of the Seder who also composed the music and words of the song.

Aftermath

After three and one-half hours of Seder service, eyes turned heavenward in silent thankfulness for the opportunity which was vouchsafed us for conducting the Passover service in blissful quiet undisturbed by the rumblings of war. (This in itself was a minor miracle—not to be disturbed by enemy planes on a most beautiful moonlight night.) The sight which met one's gaze was indescribably awe-inspiring, matchless in its magnificent beauty. One had to peer through the spaces between the branches of the giant cocoanut palms whose massive trunks bowed graciously as though in reverence to the Lord of the heavenly hosts. The gorgeous tropical full moon, remarkably sharp in outline, hovered overhead amid fluffy grayish white clouds that were tinged with the fiery red of departing twilight. Together they formed a staircase effect with the moon at the apex startlingly suggestive of a pre-view of heaven such as impressionable minds are wont to conjure up. It was truly a painters' paradise, unspeakably exquisite in its fullness of beauty leaving one inarticulate, groping for means to express the heart's fullness of appreciation, the soul's depth of joyful emotions and the mind's humble awareness of its own littleness.

The observance of this unusual Seder evoked a deep faith in the Living God of Israel who loves righteousness and justice, "Who looses them that are bound, raises up them that are bowed down, girds Israel with might and crowns Israel with glory," faith that the sins of our enemies would be requited, that the atrocities and murderous outrages committed against the Jewish people and other innocent peoples would not go unpunished, that the fate of the dictators and war-lords would be

EASTER DIALOGUE ON PILPUL

By JUDAH GOLDIN

The Professor of Christian Thought
The Professor of Judaism

These thoughts, the on the one hand, and again
The on the other hand, the firstlies, secondlies,
Delicate athletics of the mind,
Are something more than what you think they are.
Nature herself—is she so literal?
That fruit was seed, that sperm is man, that death
Should deviously detach organic substance,
Is pilpul you too readily forget.
The stranger in the gate is free to call
An unfamiliar plan of streets thin casuistry.
But have you marked his country's map? Peshat?

Religion, then—yes, Christ the crucified!
Calvary cuts diagonally from source
To final truth without entanglement.
No hermeneutics block his forward march.
His faith, self-immolating love of God,
Arrives refreshed where dialectic faints.
Christ Jesus saith, The Sabbath is for man,
Not man for Sabbath. Simeon ben Menassia,
What now, what weariness of soul is yours
That you torture Writ, await a kal vahomer,
To reach at last the self-same law, no doubt,
That Sabbath is for man, not man for the Sabbath;
But law made stone—a meteorite, at first
A star, but bright in falling only; at last
On earth a stone, all incandescence spent.
From point to point the shortest distance is
The only pilgrimage for man: the Cross.

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that of Pharaoh. Moreover the blissfully peaceful atmosphere in which we were permitted to celebrate Passover even in the midst of war seemed to augur the dawn of an era of peace and freedom for all men.

Aha! Forgive a Jew's ineptitude—
The heritage ("no doubt") of Hillel, Ishmael,
And that Galilean's son whose words
Made men wish ears were hoppers—to receive
The Q.E.D. you bring to these reflections.
With midrash too, of stars and stone and law!
Not altogether unoriginal,
Though not acute. We are too civilized
For disputations in the market place,
The mob impatient with debate—Hep, Hep—
The judges' balcony crammed with holiness,
Perchance with power. Professors too, such men
As you and I, lament the celibate mind,
The unilateral brain unfructified
By reason. Reason, ah! Here, here indeed
We take our stand to build great argument.
Reason hath said that talmud kills the spirit,
That piety is slain by hairsplitting;
If Shammaites and Hillelites must cavil
Whether the blessing over wine precedes
The blessing over day, or vice versa,
Then man is made for Sabbath, reason saith,
Not it for him . . . while Christ shakes off all haggling.
Ah, the Lamb, legend of chastity!
That Myth is dialectic crystalized
Is it so petulant to counter? Good;
We may let the fervent exegesis stand.
Reason saith what reason saith. It says
To Israel—no immigrant to Faith—
The vision is no substitute for mind.
Oh, not to be consumed the burning bush
Needs fuel, needs bark. Perhaps a twig or two
Will turn to ash. The risk ("no doubt") is great.
Yet which is the greater mystery, who shall say:
A flame unfed by brush, but Heaven-kept,
Or brush aflame with God and not consumed?

Discussion in Theology

THE VOCATION OF ISRAEL FOR OUR DAY

IN a previous discussion (THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST, Vol. X, No. 4), the point was made that the vocation of Israel must be understood as a dedication to that way of life by which the Jewish people can make the best use of the unique endowments acquired in the course of its history and the unique circumstances of its present existence. This obligation to make the best use of our collective experience is a constant element in Jewish religion, but the form of its expression at any particular time is conditioned by two factors: the world's need and the resources and opportunities of Jewry. If, in the light of this principle, we ask, "What shall be the content of Israel's vocation for our day?", the answer that suggests itself is, "To exemplify spiritual or religious nationhood to the world."

That the world could benefit by such a demonstration hardly needs to be argued. The besetting sin of our age is the abuse of nationalism. Ahad Ha-Am points out in one of his essays the failure of modern ethics to deal adequately with international relations. Although altruism is extolled as a virtue in personal relations, no nation, he asserts, ever feels justified in subordinating its own vital interests to those of another. (*Al Shete Haseippim*). In fact, no nation has yet explicitly expressed a willingness even to surrender to an international authority any considerable part of its own sovereignty. All claim the right unilaterally to determine their obligations to other nations. The doctrine of national sovereignty, as effectively maintained by most modern states, implies that there is no higher law than the will of the nation itself.

The danger of this kind of nationalism to the peace of the world is obvious. Whether it express itself actively in aggression or passively in isolationism, it is a menace to human welfare. What is needed is a religious, ethical nationalism. Such a nationalism would recognize the nation's responsibility to a transcendent Power manifest in the aspiration of men to universal freedom and universal cooperation. It would have the nations collaborate in the establishment and maintenance of a worldwide social order organized to give effect to moral law in international relations.

Jews, to be sure, are not alone in recognizing the need for an ethical nationalism, but the Jewish people is in a better position than others to appreciate that need and can make a unique contribution to its satisfaction. The circumstances of Jewish life make our people dependent on the achievement of ethical nationalism for its very survival, while its cultural tradition includes spiritual techniques for national self-preservation acquired in its long struggle for existence.

Judaism is a *religious civilization*. As the civilization of a particular people it is nationalistic in its concern for group survival and for enabling its adherents to live in freedom and security. But as a *religious civilization* it views its national life in a cosmic setting. It knows itself to be a part of mankind and has faith in the destiny of mankind. That destiny it conceives as the achievement of a way of life which shall enable the human race

to transcend the beast in man and attain to a truly human personality and a truly humane society. It envisions the life of mankind as finding its consummation in a free and cooperative social order which includes all men. In such a society nations would continue to exist because their unique cultural achievements would contribute positively to the enrichment of human life. But they would be conscious of responsibility to God, to the Power that set mankind on its quest for freedom and peace and aids mankind to attain these goals. The kind of nationhood which comports with this social ideal is what we mean by spiritual or ethical nationhood.

The very existence of Israel depends on the realization of such spiritual nationhood. In the game of power politics, the cards are stacked against the Jewish people. We hold neither military, political nor economic power in our hands. Even though we were the first people to be attacked by Hitler and the Axis Powers, we had to beg—and we have so far begged in vain—for the privilege of putting a Jewish military force in the field. Politically, we are everywhere a minority and cannot dominate an election in any country. Economically, whatever wealth we possess is mainly of the most unstable and insecure kind. Despite the myth of Jewish richness, the bulk of Jewry, even before the tragic dislocations caused by Nazi persecutions and the war, belonged to the lower middle class rather than to the wealthy. Of how little avail the riches of even wealthy Jews is in insuring Jewish survival has been plainly demonstrated by the experience of German Jewry, which at one time had enjoyed the most favorable economic position of any Jewry.

The Jewish people is thus forced to appeal for its right to live to the conscience of mankind. It has therefore an absolutely vital stake in informing that conscience. For other, more powerful nations, the temptation exists to rely on their power, to feel that they are able to secure their own future, if not quite independently of other nations, then by forming such alliances with some of them as expediency may commend. They are therefore reluctant to surrender any degree of their sovereignty to an international authority. But the time when the Jewish people was in a position to wield military, political and economic power is so remote that it has today virtually no tradition of irresponsible national sovereignty. Thus nothing in his cultural heritage obscures for the Jew the need of a universal international law and of the instruments for its development and administration. Of all peoples, Israel has least to lose and most to gain from international law and order. With the Jewish population distributed among all the nations of the world, the destruction of some segment of Jewish life is inevitable in consequence of any war, regardless of which side is victorious. No loyal Jew who understands the situation of his people can possibly be a militarist or an isolationist.

But not only is the Jewish people in a better position than others to perceive the need for spiritual nationhood; it is also in a better position to demonstrate what spiritual nationhood means and how it can be maintained. The significant fact about Jewish life which distinguishes it from that of other peoples is that it has both a diaspora and a homeland and that they are bound together by religious ties. This gives Jewry a unique opportunity of demonstrating spiritual nationhood on two fronts and under diverse conditions.

Although in the Jewish homeland our people will, if the Zionist goal is attained, exercise a certain measure of political, economic and perhaps even military power, it will be inhibited from

abusing such power by the basic condition of its political existence. It obtained the initial opportunity of reconstituting Palestine as its national home, not by military aggression nor by the economic exploitation of the native population; it was given that opportunity because the ethical right of our people to its national home was internationally recognized and endorsed after World War I. If, as we hope and expect, a Jewish Commonwealth will one day arise in Palestint, it will again be because of international consent.

The conscience of mankind has thus provided not merely the spiritual but actually the political foundation for the Jewish Commonwealth in Palestine. Moreover the great number of Jews living in the Diaspora virtually constitutes so many hostages left with the nations. Awareness of this fact will effectively deter a Palestinian Jewish Commonwealth from ever embarking on an aggressive policy toward other states or from persecuting non-Jewish minorities in Palestine. At the same time, the constant awareness of the presence of Jews in all the lands of the Diaspora will keep Palestinian Jewry from lapsing into isolationism. The Jewish people cannot help but feel that it has a stake in the welfare of every country in which Jews live. The nationalism which will find its embodiment in a Jewish Commonwealth in Palestine must, therefore, develop along democratic, spiritual and ethical lines.

In the Diaspora, also, Jewry must, to be true to itself, endeavor to influence the character of the life of the country in the direction of ethical nationalism. We should to this end interpret for our fellow citizens of other religious or cultural communities the values we have derived from our struggle to maintain our identity as a people by spiritual means.

For example, the principle technique by which Judaism maintained its national identity in the Diaspora was that of *torah* and *mitzvot*. Torah was a process of continuous self-education in the national culture. It was motivated by the religious striving for salvation or self-fulfilment for the individual, the nation and mankind. A people in which every individual identifies his deepest interests with the spirit of the nation as an instrument in the fashioning of a better world will command such loyalty and acquire such moral strength that it will never feel the need of insuring its survival by oppressing others or by selfishly isolating itself within its own borders. To apply this technique to American life would mean to teach and to study American history, literature and law in the same spirit of consecration in which the traditionalist Jew studies the Bible and Talmud. It would make of America a "holy nation" for all its citizens.

The *mitzvot* are habitual practices, many of them symbolic of values associated with historic events in the life of the Jewish people. Their performance is conceived as a religious obligation. For our fathers, who observed them scrupulously, not a day passed but they were reminded by some religious rite of their relation to their people and its relation to God. This, too, is a technique of survival that modern nations might do well to adopt. It would lead them to put more reliance on spiritual values and less on power politics, dollar diplomacy and military force.

The vocation of Israel for our day thus involves (1) the upbuilding in Palestine of a democratic Jewish Commonwealth committed to a just international order, and (2) the application, especially in the Diaspora, of the spiritual techniques of religious study and religious observance to the advancement of ethical, cultural nationalism *for all nations*. That such a program is a genuine expression of a religious calling and not merely an ar-

bitrarily chosen program of action appears from the fact that it proceeds from a religious response to the essential conditions of Jewish life. Its discharge would bring self-fulfilment and salvation to the Jewish people, for it would give them a worthwhile role to play in the world of our day for which history has qualified them. Its rejection would be fatal, leading to the frustration of the messianic aspirations associated with the return to Zion and to the eventual disappearance of Diaspora Jewry through assimilation for want of a cause for which to live.

The situation of the Jewish people today with reference to their calling is analogous to that which, according to an ancient agadah, confronted them when they stood at the foot of Mount Sinai. God is said, on that occasion, to have held the mountain suspended over their heads and to have declared: "If you accept the Torah, it will be for you good; if you reject it, here is where you will be buried." If we accept the task of exemplifying spiritual nationhood, we make Jewish life worth all the sacrifices necessary to maintain it; if we fail to do so, it is hard to see how the Jewish people can even survive.

EUGENE KOHN

CORRESPONDENCE

THE DEFENSE WORKER AND THE JEWISH COMMUNITY

Sirs:

The Reconstructionist recently published an article on the situation of the Jewish civilian defense-workers in centers of war-industry. Shortly afterwards, I moved to this community which is one of the most crowded places, where waritme activity is at its height. I felt that the situation described in your magazine was deserving of attention.

Although I was not able to get any exact statistics, I was convincingly informed, that the number of civilian defense workers, which was considerable at the time of the construction-boom, has greatly declined.

There are still a number of defense-workers scattered about, but mainly young and unmarried men, who work hard, have very little interest in religion and are too tired from work to take part in social affairs.

Both in the past and at present, the USO has—at least unofficially—considered the care of these men as one of its tasks, as far as this was possible. It has helped men who came to ask for rooms and Jewish food, and has actually opened up the USO buildings and facilities to these men who in turn participated in entertainments provided by the USO and have appreciated the help given them. The congregations, too, have opened their doors. The response, however, was weak.

The director of the industrial USO has told me, that he has repeatedly urged the Jewish workers to participate in Synagogue-activities and in worship, but without much success. There has, however, been some demand for Jewish literature which he filled.

There is certainly a reason for us to be alarmed. This is not due, however, to the alleged indifference or hostility on the part of the congregations and organizations, but rather, to the disintegration of religious spirit, which is so frequently found among the younger generation, especially those away from home.

The only other group whose appearance gave reason for concern, were those, I am told, who coming from the North and from the City, were completely unable to adjust themselves to the habits and customs of the South and the small-town environment, which in spite of the mushroom-growth in population is still noticeable. Being different in their emotional setup, their speech, habits and pace of life, as well as in their opinions, they voiced their ideas in a form, which somehow must have offended the people with whom they came in contact. This group has mainly disappeared.

Under the circumstances, there is very little for us to do. In order to have gone on record and to watch the reaction, I published a note in the local newspaper stating that I am sincerely interested in the war-worker and his problems and happy to be of assistance to any one who should feel the need of it. There was no response to this. Following a suggestion of mine, the industrial USO will have a poster in its building, giving the names and addresses of the rabbis and synagogues in the district and explaining to the men, that they will find willing help if they turn to any of the named rabbis.

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